

SELECT BOARD

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2021

The regular meeting for the Monson Select Board convened at 7:00 p.m. in the large conference room in the Town Office Building at 110 Main Street. In attendance were Patricia A. Oney, Mary K. Hull, Town Administrator Jennifer L. Wolowicz and the media. Dr. Richard M. Smith was not present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Public Comment:

- Dave Beaudoin of 2 Country Club Heights approached the Select Board and noted at the last Conservation Commission meeting the owner of the Church Seat dam was asking permission to lower the boards on the dam to basically remove the water that is currently behind the dam. Mr. Beaudoin said he feels if we give the owner of the dam permission to lower the water, the boards will never be put back and we will lose the dam, and wondered if the town would consider asking the owner to turn the dam over to the town.

Ms. Wolowicz said it is a privately owned dam.

Mr. Beaudoin said the new owners of the Church Seat building didn't want the dam, so the previous owner is still responsible for the dam, and if he lowers the water there will be no responsibility on his part because now the water will become a stream. The dam is going to remain since they aren't taking the dam out, they are just going to lower the water so it will be just a stream and he felt the dam will never be put back and we will lose it.

Mr. Beaudoin felt if the town took it over, we could do something with it, and noted forty-five years ago people used to ice skate there and have hockey games on it. Mr. Beaudoin feels this is a resource we shouldn't just be giving away and losing for the town.

Ms. Hull asked who owns the property that runs down alongside the river on Route 32?

Mr. Beaudoin said it's owned by the gentleman who wants to lower the dam, he owns that one section and that's all he owns because he sold the business side. Mr. Beaudoin reiterated he feels the town should ask this gentleman if he would give the land to the town.

Ms. Oney said given what could be a very significant impact, she felt even if he is the owner of the property, that lowering the dam is something he couldn't do without town input.

Ms. Wolowicz reminded everyone this is public comment and not open for dialog or debate.

Ms. Oney thanked Mr. Beaudoin and said we will start with the Conservation Commission.

- Jessica Allen, May Hill Road, approached the Select Board and said she wanted to speak about the mask mandate that we are seeing throughout the State and noted her seven-year-old daughter had been schooled remotely for eighteen months prior to starting school a few weeks ago. Just before starting school this year, she began having anxiety about the return to school. After seeing her doctor, they found that it was related to the change in her school atmosphere and mask wearing. She does receive extra mask breaks but is still upset daily about the rigid guidelines regarding her ability to breathe freely in school.

Ms. Allen said she has addressed the School Board and they were unable to answer what she feels are very basic and fair fact-based questions, such as what specific scientific studies are used to validate their August 25th school mask mandate and she would like to see a coherent conversation held about the science at the State level; and specifically, what anti-covid measures work; and what anti-covid measures might put an extra burden on vulnerable young people without showing the slowing of the spread of the virus.

Ms. Allen referred to M.G.L. Chapter 69 Section 1B, which talks about the duties of the School Board and wondered where in that statute the School Board has the authority to mandate masks for the students. This statute is about ten pages long and she feels they do not have the authority to go outside the scope of the existing laws concerning contagious diseases and vaccinations.

Ms. Allen is asking the Select Board to act on this conversation and take it to the State level to show her the fact-based science behind the decisions that have been made.

- Marcella Wutka, 241 Bumstead Road, approached the Select Board and said she is here to elaborate on the exact same thing, and feels it has to be heard as these kids are our future. She has tried to reach out to make comments at the last School Committee meeting and they wouldn't hear her. Ms. Wutka feels if a child gets COVID they will recover and said the people should have a choice. Ms. Wutka also feels the kids aren't learning good eye contact and verbalization skills while wearing masks.

Ms. Oney asked what the status is of the meeting that is going to take place between the School Committee, Board of Health, and Select Board.

Ms. Hull said the last she knew it was only with the Chairman of each of the Boards.

Ms. Wolowicz said this hasn't taken place yet and noted it is on the Select Board agenda for September 28th.

New Business:

Approve the minutes of August 24, 2021 – open session:

Ms. Hull made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of August 24, 2021 – open session. Ms. Oney seconded, and it was so VOTED.

Lights of Hope, September 19, 2021 – Pam West:

Ms. West approached the Select Board and explained her background noting she is a resident, a parent, and belongs to the Monson Substance Abuse Partnership Program that deals with addiction. Ms. West said she is also a member of a Facebook forum group called The Addict's Mom, and they will be holding a resource fair and candlelight vigil for addiction with candles donated by Lombard's Funeral Home, called Lights of Hope. This will be their third event. They have secured funds through our community host agreement with Holistic for this event which will be held on Sunday, September 19, 2021, in Veterans Field from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. From 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. they will have keynote speakers, including three people who will talk about their own addiction and what they are going through. Monson is the only venue for this type of an event in Massachusetts. They will have a couple of bounce houses, an obstacle course, a dunk tank, Adam's Supermarket is cooking hamburgers and hotdogs, they have an ice cream truck, a D.J., the Monson Lion's Club is doing some icees, a clown will be doing unicycling and making balloon animals, they also have ten to twelve tables of resources from our area in Hampden County, as well as Hampshire County, for addiction services. This is a completely free event.

Conservation Commission Appointment – Mary Smith:

Ms. Smith approached the Select Board and explained her background.

Ms. Hull made a motion to appoint Mary Smith to the Conservation Commission effective immediately through June 30, 2022. Ms. Oney seconded, and it was so VOTED.

Age Friendly Community Appointment – Samantha Fisk:

This was taken off the agenda as Holistic said she is no longer going to be part of the committee.

Public Hearing – Pole Petition #30383110 – Munn Road:

National Grid representative Ken Creigle approached the Select Board and read the petition into the record. The petition was okay with both the Highway and Water Sewer Departments, and there wasn't anyone in the audience to speak for or against the petition.

Ms. Hull made a motion to approve pole petition #30383110 as presented. Ms. Oney seconded, and it was so VOTED.

Fall Special Town Meeting, Monday, November 1, 2021:

Ms. Hull made a motion to set the date for the Fall Special Town Meeting for Monday, November 1, 2021, at 7:00 p.m. in Granite Valley School. Ms. Oney seconded, and it was so VOTED.

Open STM Warrant:

Ms. Hull made a motion to open the Special Town Meeting warrant. Ms. Oney seconded, and it was so VOTED.

Correspondence was read and completed.

In Other Business to Come before the Board:

- Ms. Hull wondered how we are doing with the zoom hybrid meetings.

Ms. Wolowicz noted she is currently researching sample policies from other communities to draft a policy for the town that all the Boards and Committees could use, so everyone follows the same policy to be consistent. Ms. Wolowicz said she would like someone to be the zoom master, so it won't take her attention away from the business at hand by tending to both things.

Ms. Oney asked if we have someone that could do that.

Ms. Wolowicz said Audra Staples can do it because she does our technology person.

Ms. Oney said she agrees it should be a town-wide policy and not just for this Board.

- Ms. Hull also wondered when people are court ordered to do community service if we have a policy or a program for people.

Ms. Wolowicz said she doesn't know if we have a policy in Monson. In her previous place of employment, they did participate where they came into the Police Department or to the Town Hall, and they would work with them through Administrations or through Human Resources.

Ms. Wolowicz said she will talk to Chief Kozloski about it to see if he has anything in place already, and incorporate it together.

At 7:40 p.m., Ms. Hull made a motion to adjourn from open session. Ms. Oney seconded, and it was so VOTED.

Mary K. Hull, Clerk